

Standard 8-4: The student will demonstrate an understanding of the impact of Reconstruction on the people and government of South Carolina.

8-4.3 Summarize the events and the process that led to the ratification of South Carolina's constitution of 1868, including African American representation in the constitutional convention; the major provisions of the constitution; and the political and social changes that allowed African Americans, Northerners, "carpetbaggers," and "scalawags" to play a part in South Carolina state government. (H, P)

Taxonomy Level: B 2 Understand / Conceptual Knowledge

Previous/future knowledge:

In 3rd grade, students explained how the Civil War affected South Carolina's economy, including destruction of plantations, towns, factories, and transportation systems (3-4.3). They also summarized the effects of Reconstruction in South Carolina, including the development of public education, racial advancements and tensions, and economic changes (3-4.4).

In the 5th grade, students summarized the aims of Reconstruction and explained the effects of Abraham Lincoln's assassination on the course of Reconstruction (5-1.1). They also summarized the provisions of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution, including how the amendments protected the rights of African Americans and sought to enhance their political, social, and economic opportunities (5-1.2). They compared the economic and social effects of Reconstruction on different populations (5.14) and explained the purpose and motivations behind the rise of discriminatory laws and groups and their effect on the rights and opportunities of African Americans in different regions of the United States (5-4.5).

In United States History, students will summarize the effects of Reconstruction on the southern states and the roles of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments in that era. (USHC-4.4)

It is essential for students to know:

Events that led to the ratification of a new constitution for South Carolina reflected the refusal of white society to accept the freedom of African Americans and the authority of the federal government. South Carolina refused to ratify the 14th and 15th amendments that guaranteed equal rights and the right to vote to African American men. Under Congressional Reconstruction, southern states, including South Carolina, were required to call a convention and write a new state constitution. Most whites boycotted the election of delegates to this constitutional convention. In addition, African Americans were the majority of the population. As a result, African Americans were well represented in the convention. Slightly more than half of the delegates to the convention were African American and half of those were newly freed slaves. Recent immigrants to South Carolina were also selected to write the document.

The major provisions of the constitution had significant impact on the political rights of all South Carolinians, not just the freedmen. The 1868 constitution based representation in the state legislature on population alone, not on population and wealth (see 8-2.5). It abolished property qualifications for holding office and gave the right to vote to all males. For the first time, county governments were created, thus giving South Carolinians more direct control over local government. The state also recognized its responsibility for providing for public education for the first time.

As a result of this expansion of democracy, many groups were able to participate in state government. African American *men* were allowed to vote and hold office and did so in large numbers. African Americans had greater political power in South Carolina than they did *in any other southern state*.

Reflecting their numbers in the population, African Americans held *every office* in the state with the exception of the governorship and were a majority in the state legislature throughout the Reconstruction period. South Carolina sent six African Americans to the United States House of Representatives. White propaganda often characterized the African-American elected officials as ignorant ex-slaves. Although they were inexperienced in governance, as were many whites, most African Americans who served were literate members of the middle class, most of whom had been free before the Civil War.

Northerners, recently immigrated to South Carolina, also played a significant role in the governing of the state. They were derisively called “**carpetbaggers**,” by white South Carolinians because they allegedly came to the South with all of their belongings in a carpetbag (19th century suitcase). The myth has persisted that they came to plunder the state by encouraging African Americans to vote for the Republican Party. However, most came as missionaries, teachers or entrepreneurs. Although they may have encouraged African Americans to vote for the Republican Party, this political affiliation reflected the best interests of the African American community as well. After Reconstruction, those African Americans who were able to continue to vote consistently selected the Republican Party of Lincoln, liberation and political empowerment.

White South Carolinians who previously had little political voice in the state were a third group that benefited from the new constitution. Many of these men came from the Upcountry. Derisively called “**scalawags**” by other white South Carolinians, who did not share their political pragmatism, they joined the Republican Party because they supported its position on economic growth and public schools. They wanted to rebuild the South in cooperation with the Reconstruction governments and to have a voice in the government,

It is not essential for students to know:

Students do not need to remember the origins of the terms “carpetbagger” and “scalawag”, just that these were terms of derision. They do not need to know other provisions of the Constitution of 1868 not listed in the “essentials”. They do not need to know the name of the military governor of South Carolina or where the constitutional convention met or the name of the governor who was elected under the new constitution.

Assessment guidelines:

Appropriate assessments will require students to **summarize** the events that led to the writing of the South Carolina constitution in 1868. They should be able to **explain** the major provisions of the constitution and how this constitution allowed African American, Northern immigrants and Southerners to participate in the new government. Students should be able to **interpret** maps, graphs and political cartoons and **infer** their relationship to information about the time period.